

# Summary of Commercial and Recreational Fishing Regulations for the U.S. Caribbean Exclusive Economic Zone



*For Species Managed by the  
Caribbean Fishery Management Council*



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Photos cover: T. Battista –NCCOS, NOAA, CFMC

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Photo: T. Battista/NCCOS and UNCW

## Important Phone Numbers

- **NOAA Fisheries:**

- ◇ Southeast Regional Office, St. Petersburg, FL: 727-824-5301
- ◇ Southeast Regional Office Sustainable Fisheries Division: 727-824-5305
- ◇ Southeast Regional Office Permits and Regulations Branch: 877-376-4877
- ◇ Southeast Region Office of Law Enforcement: 727-824-5344
- ◇ Office of Law Enforcement national violations tip line: 800-853-1964
- ◇ Highly Migratory Species Management Division: 301-427-8503
  - ◆ Southeast Branch Highly Migratory Species: 727-824-5399
  - ◆ 24-hour tuna information line: 888-872-8862 (also for tuna permit applications)
  - ◆ Swordfish/billfish recreational reporting: 800-894-5528

- **Caribbean Fishery Management Council:** 787-766-5926

- **U.S. Coast Guard, Sector San Juan, PR:** 787-729-6800

- **Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources:**  
787-999-2200

- **USVI Department of Planning and Natural Resources:**

- ◇ St. Thomas Office: 340-774-3320
- ◇ St. Croix Office: 340-773-1082

- **Division of Fish and Wildlife Bureau of Fisheries, USVI:**

- ◇ St. Thomas Office: 340-775-6762
- ◇ St. Croix Office: 340-773-1082 or 340-772-1955

**NOTE:** The Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) are available online. For Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic (50 CFR part 622) please visit [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/policy\\_branch/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/policy_branch/index.html). For Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (50 CFR part 635) please visit <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/regulations/index.html>.

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## What is the Caribbean Fishery Management Council?

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Council) is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council is responsible for the conservation and management of U.S. Caribbean fish stocks.

The Council consists of seven voting members:

- Four voting members appointed by the Secretary of Commerce;
- One voting member appointed by each of the Governors of Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands (USVI); and
- The Regional Administrator of NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region.

The Council manages the area from 3 to 200 nautical miles (nm) off the coasts of the USVI (St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John), and 9 to 200 nm off the coast of Puerto Rico. The Council develops fishery management plans and amendments and recommends regulations to NOAA Fisheries for implementation on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce of the United States.

*This publication was prepared for general informational purposes only and has no legal force or effect. Fishing regulations are subject to change. For additional and updated regulations please visit: [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/policy\\_branch/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/policy_branch/index.html)*

## Authorized Shark Species (retention allowed)

Large Coastal Sharks (LCS) (non-ridgeback LCS* & tiger)		Small Coastal Sharks (SCS)	Pelagic Sharks
Blacktip*	Lemon*	Atlantic sharpnose*	Blue*
Bull*	Nurse*	Blacknose*	Oceanic white-tip**
Hammerhead, great*,**	Spinner*	Bonnethead*	Porbeagle*
Hammerhead, scalloped*,**	Tiger	Finetooth*	Shortfin mako*
Hammerhead, smooth*,**			Thresher*

\* Sharks that do not have an interdorsal ridge.

\*\* Anglers cannot possess these sharks while in possession of tunas, billfish or swordfish.

## Prohibited Shark Species (must be released)

An Atlantic HMS harvested from its management unit that is not retained must be released in a manner that will ensure maximum probability of survival, but without removing the fish from the water.

Atlantic angel	Caribbean reef*	Night*	Sixgill
Basking	Caribbean sharpnose	Sandbar*	Smalltail
Bigeye sand tiger	Dusky*	Sand tiger	Whale
Bigeye sixgill	Galapagos*	Sevengill	White
Bigeye thresher	Longfin mako	Silky*	
Bignose*	Narrowtooth		

\* Ridgeback sharks that have an interdorsal ridge, or visible line of raised skin between its dorsal fins.

## HMS Recreational Reporting and Tournament Registration Requirements

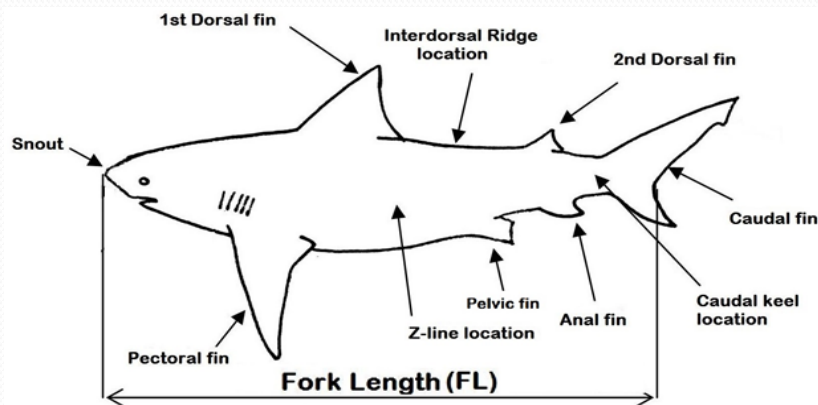
**All recreational landings of swordfish and billfishes, and landings and dead discards of Atlantic bluefin tuna must be reported within 24 hours at [hmspermits.noaa.gov](https://hmspermits.noaa.gov) or by phone at 888-872-8862 (bluefin tuna) or 800-894-5528 (swordfish and billfishes).**

**HMS tournament registration** – Required for any fishing competition that awards points or prizes for the catch and release or landing of HMS. Tournament directors or operators must register with NOAA Fisheries at least 4 weeks in advance of the scheduled tournament. If selected for reporting, tournament operators must send a summary of tournament catch to NOAA Fisheries within 7 days after the tournament has ended. HMS tournament registration forms and instructions are available online at [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/tournaments](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/tournaments) or by calling 727-824-5399.

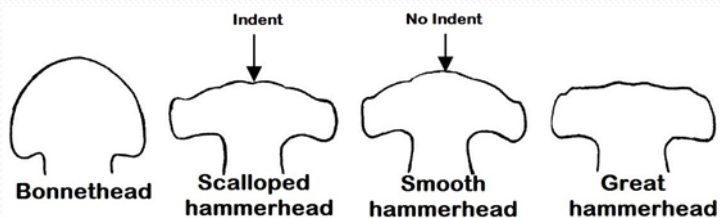
All billfish tournaments are selected for reporting. Circle hooks must be used with natural bait and natural/artificial bait combinations in all billfish tournaments. Additional recreational regulations apply. Please see <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/> or call 301-427-8503.



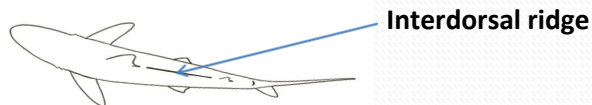
## Anatomy of a Shark



## Identification of Hammerhead Sharks

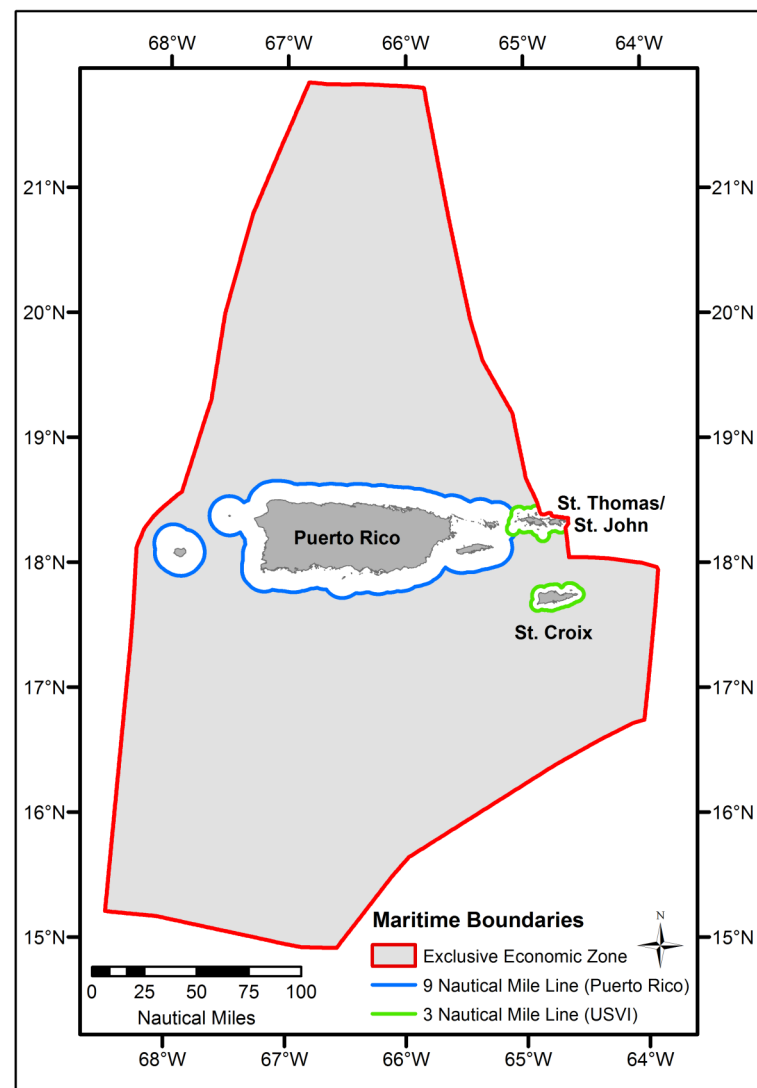


Remember: *If you don't know, let it go.* Sharks can be difficult to identify, even for experts. Be prepared to release sharks and other HMS. Download the Catch and Release guide for handy tips. To avoid accidentally retaining a prohibited species, release any sharks you are not sure you can identify. If the shark has an interdorsal ridge (a ridge of skin on the back between the two dorsal fins), there is a good chance it is a prohibited species and you should release it.



For help with shark identification, download the Recreational Shark ID Guide and Prohibited Shark ID Placard (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/species/sharks/index.html>), or contact the Atlantic HMS Management Division at 301-427-8503 or 727-824-5399 to request a waterproof copy.

## Boundaries of the U.S. Caribbean Exclusive Economic Zone



## Commercial Fishing Regulations

### Seasonal Closures

Snappers		
Common Name	Closed	Open
Silk	October 1 – December 31	January 1 – September 30
Black		
Blackfin		
Vermilion		
Mutton	April 1 – June 30	July 1 – March 31
Lane		
Groupers		
Common Name	Closed	Open
Red Hind*	December 1 – last day of February	March 1 – November 30
Yellowfin	February 1 – April 30	May 1 – January 31
Red		
Tiger		
Black		
Yellowedge		
Queen Conch		
EEZ harvest allowed only east of 64°34' W which includes Lang Bank, St. Croix. Queen conch closure might occur earlier than June 1 if 50,000 lb. territorial/EEZ quota is met.	Closed	Open
	June 1 – October 31	November 1 – May 31

\*The red hind grouper seasonal closure applies only to the Red Hind Spawning Aggregation Areas and west of 67°10' W. See pages 17-19 for more information.

### Trip Limit for the Harvest of Queen Conch

Commercial trip limit	200 queen conch per vessel/day
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## HMS Recreational Retention and Minimum Size Limits

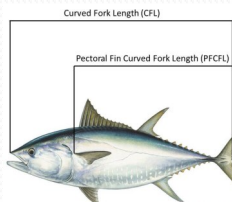
Species	Minimum Size Limit	Season	Daily Bag Limit
Tunas			
Bluefin	27" CFL 20" PFCFL (if head removed)	Year-round (or until quota is met)	Bag limits are subject to sub-quotas by size and permit categories, change seasonally, and are reduced to zero when sub-quotas are filled
Bigeye	27" CFL	Year-round	none
Yellowfin	27" CFL	Year-round	3 per person per day
Albacore	none	Year-round	none
Skipjack	none	Year-round	none
Billfishes*			
Blue marlin	99" LJFL	Year-round	none
White marlin; Roundscale spearfish	66" LJFL	Year-round	none
Sailfish	63" LJFL	Year-round	none
Swordfish	47" LJFL, or 25" CK	Year-round	1 per person per trip (maximum 4 per vessel/ trip for Angling boats; 6 per vessel/trip for Charter boats; 15 per vessel/ trip for Headboats)
Sharks**			
Smoothhound and spiny dogfish	None	None	None
Atlantic sharpnose shark	None	Year-round	1 per person
Bonnethead	None	Year-round	1 per person
Hammerheads (great, scalloped***, and smooth)	78" FL	Year-round	1 per vessel (hammerhead OR other shark)
Other Sharks (except prohibited shark species)	54" FL	Year-round	

\* Harvest, retention, or possession of longbill spearfish is prohibited.

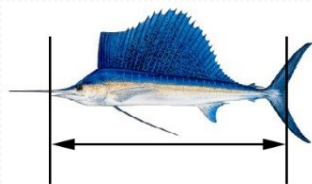
\*\* Starting January 1, 2018, non-offset corrodible circle hooks will be required when fishing for and retaining sharks except when using flies or lures.

\*\*\* Scalloped hammerhead sharks in the U.S. Caribbean are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. As of printing of this guide, harvest is allowed, but not encouraged. For more information, go to <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/> or call 301-427-8503.

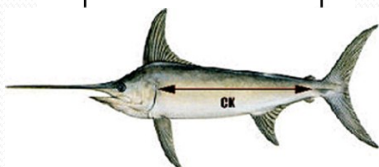
## Measurement Guidelines



**Curved Fork Length (CFL)** – line tracing the contour of the body from the tip of the upper jaw to the fork of the tail. Headless Bluefin tuna should be measured using a Pectoral Fin Curved Fork Length (PFCFL).



**Lower Jaw Fork Length (LJFL)** – Straight line measurement from the tip of the lower jaw to the fork of the tail.



**Cleithrum to Caudal Keel (CK)** – Curved length measurement from cleithrum to caudal keel.

## Recreational HMS Regulations

Federal regulations at 50 CFR 635 govern fisheries for Atlantic HMS including tunas, swordfishes, billfishes, and sharks (a brief summary is provided below).

- For more information about Atlantic HMS fisheries regulations, go to <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/> or call 301-427-8503 or 727-824-5399.
- Starting January 1, 2018, anglers fishing for or retaining sharks will be required to have a shark endorsement added to their permit. The endorsement requires online training and is available when getting the permit.
- An Atlantic HMS harvested but not retained must be released in a manner that will ensure maximum probability of survival, without removing the fish from the water.

### HMS Recreational Permit Requirements\*

HMS Angling permit	Required to fish recreationally for, retain, or possess any HMS. Sale of HMS is not permitted under this permit.
HMS Charter/ Headboat permit	Required on a for-hire trip to fish for, retain, or possess any HMS. Regulations may vary depending whether the vessel is a charter or headboat, and whether the vessel is on a for-hire or non for-hire trip.
Atlantic Tunas General permit and/or Swordfish General Commercial permit	Primarily these are commercial fishing permits; however, when fishing in a registered HMS tournament, a vessel with either of these permits may fish under recreational retention and size limits.

\* Permits may be obtained by visiting [hmspermits.noaa.gov](http://hmspermits.noaa.gov) or calling 888-872-8862

## Prohibited Species

If these species are caught in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ, they must be released immediately with a minimum of harm.

<b>Parrotfish</b>
Midnight, blue, and rainbow parrotfish harvest is prohibited.
<b>Groupers</b>
Nassau and Goliath grouper harvest is prohibited.
<b>Corals</b>
Corals cannot be harvested in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ. Harvest is only allowed through a special permit for scientific or educational purposes.
<b>Queen Conch</b>
Queen conch harvest is prohibited in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ except east of 64° 34' W which includes Lang Bank, St. Croix, USVI, during the open season.

## Size Limits

A fish or invertebrate not in compliance with its required size limit, as specified in this section, in or from the U.S. Caribbean EEZ, may not be possessed, sold, or purchased. A fish or invertebrate not in compliance with its size limit must be released immediately with a minimum of harm.

<b>Parrotfish</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 inches (in) (20.3 cm) fork length (FL) minimum size for redband parrotfish <u>only applies in St. Croix EEZ waters.</u></li> <li>9 in (22.9 cm) FL minimum size all other parrotfish (princess, queen, striped, redtail, stoplight, redfin) <u>only applies in St. Croix EEZ waters.</u></li> </ul>
<b>Spiny Lobster</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum size limit of no less than 3.5 in (8.9 cm) carapace length.</li> <li>No harvest of egg bearing females.</li> </ul>
<b>Yellowtail Snapper</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 in (30.5 cm) minimum total length.</li> </ul>
<b>Queen Conch</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Queen conch minimum size limit is either 9 in (22.9 cm) in length, that is, from the tip of the spire to the distal end of the shell, or 3/8 in (9.5 mm) in lip width at its widest point</li> </ul>

## Fish Trap Requirements in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ

- Fish traps must display the official number specified for the vessel by Puerto Rico or the USVI so as to be easily identified. Unmarked traps will be considered illegal traps and will be disposed of.
- Fish traps that are tied together in a trap line must have at least one buoy that floats at the surface attached at each end of the trap line. Each buoy must display the official number and color code assigned to the vessel by Puerto Rico or the USVI, whichever is applicable, so as to be easily distinguished, located, and identified.
- Fish traps with hexagonal mesh openings must have a minimum mesh size of 1.5 in (3.8 cm) in the smallest dimension measured between centers of opposite strands.
- A bare-wire fish trap that has other than hexagonal mesh openings or a fish trap of other than bare wire, such as coated wire or plastic, must have a minimum mesh size of 2.0 in (5.1 cm) in the smallest dimension measured between centers of opposite strands.
- A fish trap must have an escape panel located on one side of the trap, excluding the top, bottom, and side containing the trap entrance. The opening covered by the panel must measure not less than 8 by 8 in (20.3 by 20.3 cm). The mesh size of the panel may not be smaller than the mesh size of the trap. The panel must be attached to the trap with untreated jute twine with a diameter not exceeding 1/8 in (3.2 mm). An access door may serve as the panel, provided it is on an appropriate side, it is hinged only at its bottom, its only other fastening is untreated jute twine with a diameter not exceeding 1/8 in (3.2 mm), and such fastening is at the top of the door so that the door will fall open when such twine degrades. Jute twine used to secure a panel may not be wrapped or overlapped.
- A fish trap can only be pulled or tended by the owner unless the owner provides written consent specifying the time period such consent is effective and the trap owner's gear identification number and color code.

## Other Atlantic HMS Commercial Permits

Commercial Tunas permits	Unless a vessel has a Commercial Caribbean Small Boat Permit, vessels must have a commercial tuna permit to sell Atlantic bluefin, albacore, bigeye, skipjack, or yellowfin tuna. Tuna permits are categorized as General, Longline, Purse Seine, Harpoon, or Charter/Headboat. Separate Atlantic bluefin quota and gear restrictions apply to each category.
Commercial Swordfish permits	Unless a vessel has a Commercial Caribbean Small Boat Permit, vessels must have a Directed or Incidental Swordfish limited access permit, a Swordfish Handgear limited access permit, a Swordfish General Commercial permit, or an HMS Charter/Headboat (non for-hire trips) permit for commercial harvest and sale of swordfish.
Commercial Shark permits	Vessels must have a Directed or Incidental Shark limited access permit for harvest and sale of sharks.
Dealer permits for Tunas, Swordfish, or Sharks	Unless a vessel has a Commercial Caribbean Small Boat Permit, vessels must sell HMS to a permitted HMS dealer. An HMS dealer permit is required for a dealer to receive tunas, swordfish, or sharks harvested from the U.S. Caribbean.

- The Atlantic Tunas General Category, Harpoon, HMS Charter/Headboat permits, HMS Angling permit, and Swordfish General commercial permits are open access permits. For more information about open access permits please go to <https://hmspermits.noaa.gov> or call 888-872-8862.
- The Directed and Incidental Swordfish and Shark permits, Swordfish Handgear permit, Atlantic Tunas Longline permit, and the Purse Seine permit are limited access permits. For more information about purse seine limited access permits please go to <https://hmspermits.noaa.gov> or call 888-872-8862. For more information about other limited access permits please go to <http://go.usa.gov/3WNRT> or call 877-376-4877.
- Federal dealer permits are required to purchase, trade, or barter any HMS from a U.S. fishing vessel, even if the HMS product is landed in a foreign port.
  - \* For more information about swordfish and shark dealer permits please go to <http://go.usa.gov/3WNRT> or call 877-376-4877 (SERO Permit Shop).
  - \* For more information about tuna dealer permits please go to <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/aps/permits/dealer/index.html> or call 978-281-9370 ext. 6442.



## Commercial Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Regulations

Federal regulations at 50 CFR 635 govern fisheries for Atlantic HMS (tunas, swordfish, billfishes, and sharks). The type of permit required to commercially harvest and sell HMS depends on the species targeted and the gear used. See the following tables to determine which permit is required.

- For more information about Atlantic HMS fisheries regulations and permitting, including size and retention limits, please go to <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/> or call 301-427-8503 or 727-824-5399.
- For updates on tuna quota monitoring and tuna retention limit adjustments, call the Atlantic Tunas Information Line at 888-872-8862 or visit [hmspermits.noaa.gov](https://hmspermits.noaa.gov).

### HMS Commercial Caribbean Small Boat Permit

Valid only in the U.S. Caribbean, this permit allows fishing for and sale of bigeye, albacore, yellowfin and skipjack tunas, and swordfish. Shark retention under the permit is not currently allowed. The permit authorizes the use of specific gears and is restricted to vessels less than or equal to 45 feet in overall length. This permit may not be held in combination with any other HMS vessel permits. HMS landings must be reported through existing territorial government programs. Specific retention limits, minimum size limits, and authorized gears apply (see the following table). To apply for this permit, go to <http://go.usa.gov/3WNRT> or call 877-376-4877.

Species	Bag Limit per vessel per trip	Minimum Size	Authorized Gear
Bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack tunas	10 (total for all species)	Bigeye and yellowfin tunas: 27 in (69 cm) curved fork length; Albacore and Skipjack tuna: no minimum size	Rod and reel, handline, harpoon, bandit gear, green-stick gear, and buoy gear (yo-yo gear)
Swordfish	2	47 in lower jaw fork length (if head attached) 25 in cleithrum to caudal keel (if any portion of head removed)	Rod and reel, handline, harpoon, bandit gear, and buoy gear (yo-yo gear)
Sharks	No retention	Not applicable	Rod and reel, handline, and bandit gear

## Spiny Lobster Trap Requirements in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ

- Spiny lobster traps must display the official number specified for the vessel by Puerto Rico or the USVI so as to be easily identified. Unmarked traps will be considered illegal traps and will be disposed of.
- Spiny lobster traps that are tied together in a trap line must have at least one buoy that floats at the surface attached at each end of the trap line. Each buoy must display the official number and color code assigned to the vessel by Puerto Rico or the USVI, whichever is applicable, so as to be easily distinguished, located, and identified.
- A spiny lobster trap must contain on any vertical side or on the top an escape panel no smaller in diameter than the throat or entrance of the trap. The panel must be made of or attached to the trap by one of the following degradable materials:
  - ◇ Untreated fiber of biological origin with a diameter not exceeding 1/8 in (3.2 mm). This includes, but is not limited to tyre palm, hemp, jute, cotton, wool, or silk.
  - ◇ Ungalvanized or uncoated iron wire with a diameter not exceeding 1/16 in (1.6 mm), that is, 16 gauge wire.
- A spiny lobster trap can only be pulled or tended by the owner unless the owner provides written consent specifying the time period such consent is effective and the trap owner's gear identification number and color code.

# Recreational Fishing Regulations

## Seasonal Closures

Snappers		
Common Name	Closed	Open
Silk	October 1 – December 31	January 1 – September 30
Black		
Blackfin		
Vermilion		
Mutton	April 1 – June 30	July 1 – March 31
Lane		
Groupers		
Common Name	Closed	Open
Red Hind*	December 1 – last day of February	March 1 – November 30
Yellowfin	February 1 – April 30	May 1 – January 31
Red		
Tiger		
Black		
Yellowedge		

\*The red hind grouper seasonal closure applies only to the Red Hind Spawning Aggregation Areas and west of 67°10' W. See pages 17-19 for more information.

## Prohibited Species

If these species are caught in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ, they must be released immediately with a minimum of harm.

Parrotfish
Midnight, blue, and rainbow parrotfish harvest is prohibited.
Groupers
Nassau and Goliath grouper harvest is prohibited.
Corals
Corals cannot be harvested in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ except through a special permit for scientific and educational purposes.
Queen Conch
Queen conch harvest is prohibited in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ except east of 64°34' W which includes Lang Bank, St. Croix, USVI.

## Puerto Rico

### 1. Bajo de Sico:

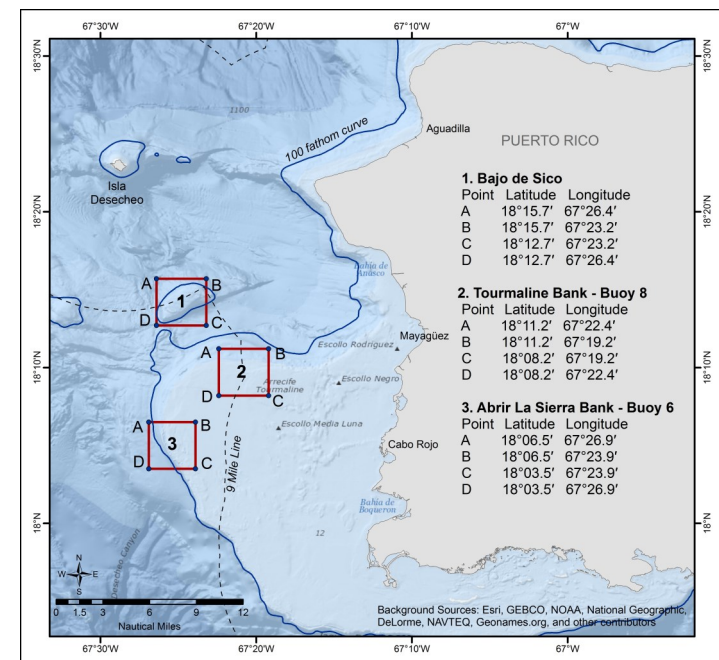
- Closed from October 1 through March 31, each year, to all fishing or possession of Council-managed Caribbean reef fish species.
- The harvest of HMS species and Caribbean spiny lobster is allowed.
- The use of pots, traps, bottom longlines, gill or trammel nets is prohibited year-round.
- Anchoring is prohibited year-round.

### 2. Tourmaline Bank:

- Closed from December 1 through February 28, each year, to all fishing, including HMS species and Caribbean spiny lobster.
- The use of pots, traps, bottom longlines, gill or trammel nets is prohibited year-round.

### 3. Abrir la Sierra Bank:

- Closed from December 1 through February 28, each year, to all fishing, including HMS species and Caribbean spiny lobster.
- The use of pots, traps, bottom longlines, gill or trammel nets is prohibited year-round.



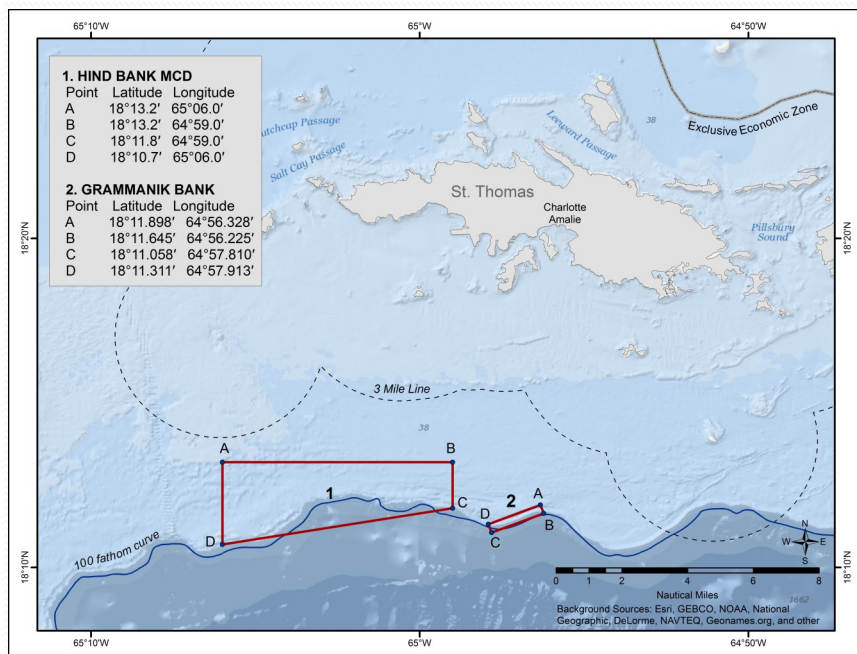
## St. Thomas, USVI

### 1. Hind Bank Marine Conservation District (MCD):

- Closed year-round to all fishing activities, including HMS species and Caribbean spiny lobster.
- Anchoring is prohibited year-round.

### 2. Grammanik Bank:

- Closed from February 1 through April 30, each year, to all fishing activities.
- The harvest of HMS species is allowed.
- The use of pots, traps, bottom longlines, gill or trammel nets is prohibited year-round.



## Bag Limits

Species taken under the recreational bag limit are not to be sold.

Aggregate bag limit for:	Allowed quantity:
Snapper, grouper, and parrotfish	5 fish per person/day or, if 3 or more persons are on board, 15 fish per vessel/day; but not to exceed: 2 parrotfish per person/day or 6 parrotfish per vessel/day.
Angelfish, boxfish, goatfish, grunts, wrasses, jacks, scups and porgies, squirrelfish, tilefish, surgeonfish, aquarium trade reef fish species, triggerfish and filefish.	5 fish per person/day or, if 3 or more persons are on board, 15 fish per vessel/day, but not to exceed: 1 surgeonfish per person/day or 4 surgeonfish per vessel/day.
Spiny lobster	3 spiny lobster per person/day, no more than 10 spiny lobster per vessel/day.
Queen conch – harvest of queen conch is only allowed east of 64° 34' W which includes Lang Bank, St. Croix, USVI, during the open season. Harvest in the rest of the EEZ is prohibited.	3 queen conch per person/day, or if more than 4 persons aboard vessel, 12 queen conch per vessel/day.

## Size Limits

A fish or invertebrate not in compliance with its required size limit, as specified in this section, in or from the U.S. Caribbean EEZ, must be released immediately with a minimum of harm.

<b>Parrotfish</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 in (20.3 cm) fork length (FL) minimum size for redband parrotfish <u>only applies in St. Croix EEZ waters.</u></li> <li>• 9 in (22.9 cm) FL minimum size all other parrotfish (princess, queen, striped, redband, stoplight, redfin) <u>only applies in St. Croix EEZ waters.</u></li> </ul>
<b>Spiny Lobster</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum size limit of no less than 3.5 in (8.9 cm) carapace length.</li> <li>• No harvest of egg bearing females.</li> </ul>
<b>Yellowtail Snapper</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 in (30.5 cm) minimum total length.</li> </ul>
<b>Queen Conch</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Queen conch minimum size limit is either 9 in (22.9 cm) in length, that is, from the tip of the spire to the distal end of the shell, or 3/8 in (9.5 mm) in lip width at its widest point.</li> </ul>

## General Gear Restrictions

Applies to both the commercial and recreational sectors.

General Gear and Method Restrictions Applicable to All Fisheries:	
Reef Fish Fishery	No use of explosives.
Spiny Lobster Fishery	
Coral Reef Resources Fishery	No chemicals or plant-derived toxins can be used in a coral area.
Queen Conch Fishery	
Gear and Method Restrictions Applicable to Specific Fisheries:	
Reef Fish, including aquarium trade species	No use of poisons, drugs, or other chemicals.
	No use of powerheads.
	No use of gillnets and trammel nets.
	Dip nets and slurp guns allowed for aquarium species.
	Fish must be landed with head and fins intact*.
Coral Reef Resources	No chemicals or plant-derived toxins can be used in a coral area.
	No use of power-assisted tools.
Spiny Lobster	No use of spears, hooks, or similar devices.
	No use of gillnets and trammel nets.
	Lobster must be landed with head and carapace intact.
Queen Conch	No harvest by diving while using a continued air supply from surface.
	Queen conch must be landed with meat and shell intact.

\* Certain exceptions to this rule apply. See 50 CFR 622.10

## Aquarium Trade Species

Please review the Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic, 50 CFR part 622 regulations for a list of allowed aquarium trade species harvest. This list can be found in Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix A to Part 622 for Caribbean Coral Reef Resources and Caribbean Reef Fish, respectively. A live red hind or mutton snapper cannot be sold or purchased and used in the marine aquarium trade.

## Area Closures in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ

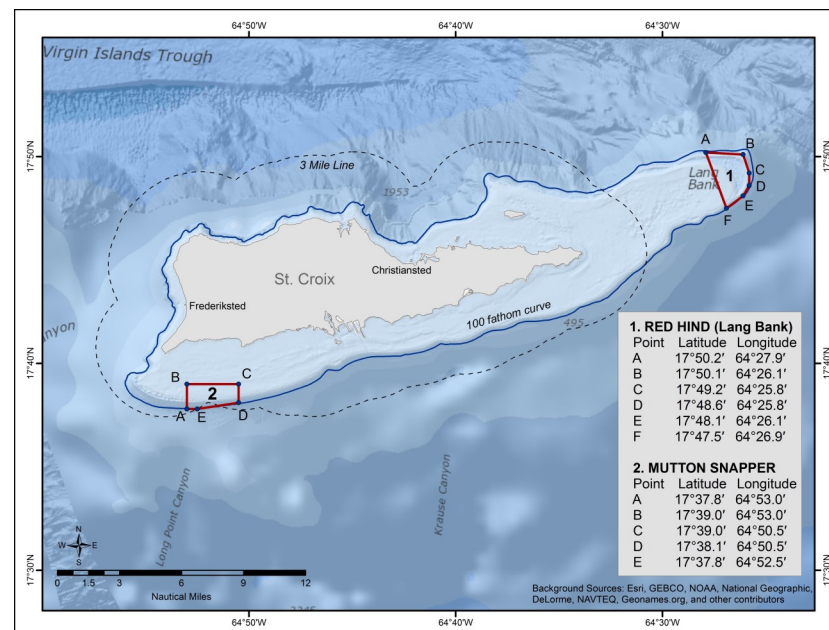
### St. Croix, USVI

#### 1. Red Hind Spawning Aggregation Area (Lang Bank):

- Closed from December 1 through February 28, each year, to all fishing activities, including Highly Migratory Species (HMS) and Caribbean spiny lobster.
- The use of pots, traps, bottom longlines, gill or trammel nets is prohibited year-round.

#### 2. Mutton Snapper Spawning Aggregation Area:

- Closed from March 1 through June 30, each year, to all fishing activities, including HMS species and Caribbean spiny lobster.
- The use of pots, traps, bottom longlines, gill or trammel nets is prohibited year-round.





Annual Catch Limit (ACL) values (pounds) for each island group, fishery management unit, and sector (commercial and recreational). For the Puerto Rico recreational sector, numbers of individuals are in parentheses.

Fishery Management Unit	Puerto Rico		St. Croix	St. Thomas/ St. John
	Commercial Sector	Recreational Sector		
	ACL	ACL		
Queen Conch	0	0	50,000	0
Parrotfish	52,737	15,263 (9,118)	240,000	42,500
Snapper Unit 1	284,685	95,526 (83,197)	N/A	N/A
Snapper Unit 2	145,916	34,810 (7,862)		
Snapper Unit 3	345,775	83,158 (78,024)		
Snapper Unit 4	373,295	28,509 (27,866)		
Snapper Total	1,149,671	242,004 (196,949)	102,946	133,775
Grouper	177,513	77,213 (93,580)	30,435	51,849
Angelfish	8,984	4,492 (1,667)	305	7,897
Boxfish	86,115	4,616 (2,810)	8,433	27,880
Goatfishes	17,565	362 (814)	3,766	320
Grunts	182,396	5,028 (11,531)	36,881	37,617
Wrasses	54,147	5,050 (4,613)	7	585
Jacks	86,059	51,001 (37,945)	15,489	52,907
Scups & Porgies	24,739	2,577 (3,079)	4,638	21,819
Squirrelfish	16,663	3,891 (8,510)	121	4,241
Surgeonfish	7,179	3,590 (5,365)	33,603	29,249
Triggerfish & Filefish	58,475	21,929 (11,620)	24,980	74,447
Spiny Lobster	327,920	N/A	107,307	104,199
U.S. Caribbean EEZ ACL				
Tilefish	14,642			
Aquarium Trade	8,155			

Snapper Unit 1 includes silk, black, blackfin, vermillion, and wenchman.

Snapper Unit 2 includes queen and cardinal.

Snapper Unit 3 includes gray, lane, mutton, dog, schoolmaster, and mahogany.

Snapper Unit 4 includes yellowtail.

## Measurement Guidelines

**Total Length** – straight line distance from the tip of the snout to the tip of the tail (caudal fin), excluding any caudal filament, while the fish is lying on its side. The mouth of the fish may be closed and/or the tail may be squeezed together to give the greatest overall measurement.



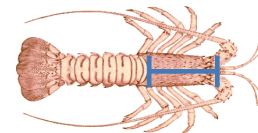
Total Length (TL)

**Fork Length** – straight line distance from the tip of the head (snout) to the rear center edge of the tail (caudal fin).



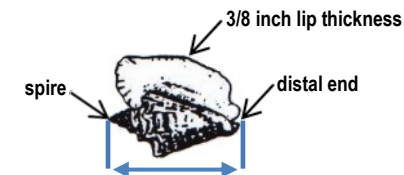
Fork Length (FL)

**Carapace Length** – measurement of the carapace (head and body) of a spiny lobster from the anteriormost edge (front) of the groove between the horns directly above the eyes, along the middorsal line (middle of the back), to the rear edge of the top part of the carapace, excluding any translucent membrane.



Carapace Length (CL)

**Queen Conch** – minimum size limit of either 9 inch (22.9 cm) in length from the tip of the spire to the distal end of the shell, or 3/8 inch (9.5 mm) in lip width at its widest point. The queen conch must be landed with meat and shell intact.



9 inch shell length

## Species Identification Chart



Red Grouper



Black Grouper



Tiger Grouper



Yellowfin Grouper



Yellowedge Grouper



Red Hind Grouper



Goliath Grouper



Nassau Grouper



Rainbow Parrotfish



Blue Parrotfish



Midnight Parrotfish



Mutton Snapper



Lane Snapper



Black Snapper



Blackfin Snapper



Vermilion Snapper



Silk Snapper



Yellowtail Snapper



Spiny Lobster



Queen Conch



Corals

## Annual Catch Limits

An annual catch limit is the total amount of a species or species group that can be taken by fishers per calendar year. Annual catch limits can be measured in pounds or numbers of individuals. An annual catch limit can apply to a single species (for example queen conch) or a group of species (for example, Snapper Unit 2 that includes queen and cardinal snappers).

### Accountability Measures

- Accountability measures are management controls to prevent annual catch limits from being exceeded, and to correct overages if they occur.
- Accountability measures are triggered if landings exceed the annual catch limits.
- Throughout U.S. Caribbean EEZ waters, the accountability measures consist of reducing the length of the fishing season for that species group the year following the annual catch limit overage determination by the amount needed to prevent such an overage from occurring again.

### Why do we need Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures?

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires fishery managers to establish annual catch limits and accountability measures for all Council-managed species to:

- End and prevent overfishing (i.e., rate of fish removal too high).
- Maximize long-term, sustainable harvest and the health of the habitats upon which fishery resources depend.